

Eastern Area Coordination Center

Fuels and Fire Behavior Advisory

Issued September 16, 2011

Subject: Frost and Freeze conditions spread across dry fuels throughout the Lake States.

Discussion: At a time when even firefighters are thinking of fall projects and hunting seasons, weather and fire potential outlooks for the next two weeks suggest that this year's fire season may still pack a punch or two across the upper Great Lakes. While national drought assessments suggest that less than 5 percent of the area is in severe drought, record drought codes at many northern weather stations reinforce reports of ground fire in the swamps, lightning starts, and holdover fires.

The Pagami Creek Fire in the Minnesota arrowhead demonstrated how these dry summer fuels, when subjected to high temperatures and strong winds, can produce extreme fire behavior. Though the recent dramatic cooling is providing some immediate relief, widespread frost will cure live grasses and forbs and keep dead fuels dry over the next week. Scattered light showers are not even wetting fuels in many cases. Outlooks for next week suggest a good chance for return to warm and dry weather over much of the driest parts of lake states.

These conditions alone do not spell imminent danger in the days and weeks ahead. Days are shorter and humidity recovery is becoming more consistent. But they should convince everyone that vigilance is still in order. Assume that the remaining green fuels in open areas will burn readily. Continue to monitor forecasts daily for above normal temperatures, poor humidity recovery, and wind events as indicators of potential for rapid fire spread, intense burning and extreme fire behavior.

Concerns to Firefighters and the Public:

- Multiple jurisdictions transitioning beyond initial attack
- Mop-up and lingering heat will require greater time, resources, and caution.
- Expect greater intensity and quicker transition to larger fires.
- Expect greater resistance to control at all levels; reliance on traditional barriers and techniques are ineffective
- Expect the complexity and scope of fires to accelerate more quickly

Mitigation Measures:

- Stay informed of current conditions, indicators and weather. Obtain a thorough, local briefing.
- Anticipate problem fire behavior and quick changes in complexity.
- Communicate conditions and observed fire behavior; stay tuned in.
- Anticipate the need for quicker, earlier escape routes to substantial safety zones; validate communications with resources; and know where and what the fire is doing and who is watching out for you and your resources. Continually rehearse these needs.

Area of Concern:

- Much of Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin